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ABSTRACT

Faced with budget cuts, demands for accountability by state legislatures and higher education councils, and a history of autocratic governance, the faculty morale at Paducah Community College, in Kentucky, reached its lowest point in 1990. A new president arrived, however, who had recently completed research on governance styles in higher education and developed the fourth paradigm of governance, Faculty Professional Self-Esteem. This paradigm contends that teachers who believe they are treated with respect and valued as professionals are more effective than those who do not believe so. Further, the concept is centered on the following nine variables of needs and interests of faculty and staff identified through a study of 25 community colleges in 13 states: (1) the physical environment and its condition, including the layout and state of repair; (2) appropriate consultative and participatory management; (3) open communications; (4) honest, even-handed administrators; (5) thorough and open access to budget development; (6) control over classroom-related matters; (7) adequate instructional support services; (8) opportunities for professional growth and renewal; and (9) meaningful involvement in setting and evaluating institutional mission, goals, and objectives. The fourth paradigm suggests that, in times of limited resources, enhanced self-esteem and shared governance provide the tools to reshape existing resources for a more effective learning environment. (KP)

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Faculty Morale-Enhancing it in Spite of Diminishing Resources and Challenges

by Andrew Halford,
Chair Professional Development

Paper presented at the International Conference for Community College Chairs, Deans, and Other Instructional Leader 3rd, Phoenix, AZ, February 23-26, 1994

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FACULTY MORALE--ENHANCING IT IN SPITE OF DIMINISHING RESOURCES AND CHALLENGES

by Andrew Halford, Chair
Professional Development

Paducah Community College, as have many of your colleges, has experienced many changes in its sixty year history and in the last twenty-five years as part of the University of Kentucky Community College System. In the Kentucky system and on the state level which is based on a funding formula and available monies, budgets are large one year and then almost nonexistent the next, a game we play every two years when the state legislature meets. Now, in 1994, we have experienced three large budget cuts and will realize no new monies to speak of, and tuition for our students will increase by fifteen percent in the fall of 1994.

This scenario continues with the demand by state legislatures and by councils of higher education to make higher education more accountable by measuring the number of graduates in the majors, programs, offered in a conventional period of time (four semesters in a community college and eight semesters in a four year college). In the community colleges, a typical student may matriculate in the conventional four semester pattern; some of our best students take six, eight, ten semesters to complete a degree program because of their working full-time or because of their being deliberate/careful about choosing a major.

For Paducah, we have been fortunate enough to have a separate

source of funding under the auspices of our founding charter as a municipal college that could collect approved property tax monies, and when we became part of the university system in 1968, we retained the tax base from both the city of Paducah and McCracken County. Paducah is different within the university system because of this money which does allow us to do more even though through the state we receive less. Such a situation has been the envy of other community colleges in Kentucky and should have had Paducah sitting very comfortably in the lead professionally and academically.

But in a good scenario often lies a not-so-good aspect, and ours was twenty-three years of autocratic governance through isolation. Morale was at its lowest point in 1990. Many faculty had individually and creatively survived the twenty-three years and were tired of not knowing how to change the atmosphere of the college. Faculty self-esteem was low.

Into this environment came our new president who had just recently completed research on governance styles in higher education, especially community colleges and had developed the fourth paradigm of governance: **Faculty Professional Self-Esteem.** This concept is based on the contention that "'teachers who believe that they are treated with respect and valued as professionals are more effective than those who do not believe so'"(O'Hara, 1992), and he was ready to make these concepts

actualities at Paducah. The concept that he has developed moves through nine variables of needs and interests of faculty/staff. The basic need and the foundation from which to build trust centers on the physical environment and its condition. Well, the architectural lay-out of our campus was, and is, excellent, but the physical condition was on a run-away train of neglect. During the first few months of presidency, he had small discussion sessions with every faculty and staff member; the number one issue focused on the physical plant, especially erratic heating and cooling. The first goal of the new president was to improve this situation one hundred percent in three years, and he has met his goal of rebuilding the infrastructure.

Some colleagues expressed negative comments about what the focus was from the new president, but he saw the need to meet these "environmental conditions that faculty have long said are important to their well-being on the job" (O'Hara, 1992) and then to build from there. And he is doing just that with his style of participatory governance. Other variables include "appropriate consultative and participatory management; open communications; honest, evenhanded administrators; thorough and open access to budget development; control over classroom-related matters; adequate instructional support services; opportunities for professional growth and renewal; meaningful involvement in setting and evaluating institutional mission, goals, and objectives"(O'Hara, 1992). These variables are the result of the

data collected through a study of 25 community colleges in 13 states to determine the influences on faculty self-esteem (O'Hara, 1992). The base level of meeting immediate needs/concerns helps to establish trust and a foundation from which to build. From my observation of twenty-five years at Paducah, this concept works but is time consuming and not over-night in bringing final results.

Robert Fulghum in **MAYBE(MAYBE NOT)** presents a scenario about trust and cooperative spirit by using the old, familiar game of musical chairs(1993). What strikes me about this scenario is that when we look for solutions or for answers, they might come from a reworking of the familiar or they might be so obvious that we overlook them in trying to be excessive in dealing with complex problems/situations. From my American literature background, Robert Frost presents the idea that one aim in poetry is to use simple settings to deal with complex issues/concerns, but more profoundly, he says that poetry should make you realize what you didn't know that you already knew.

In other words, in these times of short falls in budgets and increasing challenges in the academic community, we might need to spend more energy in reshaping what we already have and not so much time in reinventing and conjuring up new ideas and concepts. Certainly, we cannot take past experiences and concepts that

worked and reuse them without doing some reconfiguration; we have to be flexible based on sound foundations and strong sense of mission and direction.

Thinking about Fulghum's scenario, we can follow his example and take the game of musical chairs to work through the misconceptions about winning and losing and move toward the understanding that we all can be winners, directly as well as indirectly (1993). One colleague's success should be an enhancement, not an intimidation or a threat or a game of competition. In education, as in all of society, we have to realize that we are all players with somewhat different roles and that we all contribute to the success, or failure, of our workplace.

The study on the fourth paradigm brings to focus that most faculty realize that "outside forces dictate much of the funding" and "that faculty 'power" in determining budget may not be the real issue"(O'Hara, 1992). But what faculty do realize is that uppermost in their sense of self-esteem is the "way things are handled"(O'Hara, 1992).

With self-esteem and with the recognition that we are all players in what should be a winning game can only result in better teaching/learning situations for our students. One premise of the fourth paradigm says that a faculty with self-esteem ,a

positive outlook, and respect leads to an environment where students learn more effectively. In these times of challenge and low and diminishing budgets, enhanced self-esteem and shared governance may be the salvation. Along with self-esteem comes the notion that we may have the answers right before us and that they might need only take new shapes to be more viable in the teaching/learning environment.

Paducah Community College has survived and is deliberately on a course of professional improvement in all areas, and we must face the reality that the future of higher education is the discovery of doing more with less and in reshaping what we already know and have. As Terry Kay says in **To Dance with the White Dog**, living is not about beginnings and endings but discoveries.

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